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STATE FOR DRL/CRA (D.DOLAN, S.COOKE), NEA/ARPI

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UPDATES TO THE 2005 HUMAN RIGHTS COUNTRY REPORT
FOR OMAN

REF: A. SECSTATE 133253

[B](#). MUSCAT 01914

[C](#). MUSCAT 01915

[D](#). MUSCAT 01874

Per reftel A, the following is updated information to supplement our 2005 Human Rights Report. Updates are keyed to relevant sections:

SECTION 1: Respect for the Integrity of the Person; Part D - Amnesty: On November 17, the Sultan pardoned an additional 232 Omanis and 43 expatriates convicted of various crimes.

SECTION 2: Respect for Civil Liberties: There were 16 registered non-governmental organizations. In its first move to educate the public on human rights, the government announced on December 21 that the national Teacher Preparation Program will now include a course on teaching human rights (Ref B).

SECTION 3: Elections and Political Participation: In further expansion of the nascent legislative role of the elected Consultative Council, the government for the first time had to await the Council's formal approval of the draft 2006 budget and Seventh Five-Year Development Plan in December before passing it into law. Prior to the Council's vote, the Minister of National Economy appeared in person to testify before the members about the draft texts. By law, the Council has 30 days to review the government's draft budget and Five-Year Plan.

SECTION 3: Government Corruption and Transparency: In an October report, the Berlin-based organization Transparency International ranked Oman as the least corrupt Arab nation. In November, Oman and Lebanon were jointly awarded the Canada-based Fraser Institute's "Overall Arab Economic Freedom Award."

SECTION 5: Trafficking in Persons: After announcing in August that the Ministry of Sports raised the minimum age for camel jockeys from 14 to 18 years, to be phased in annually until 2009, the Oman Camel Racing Federation announced in December that all riders will be required to apply for an identity card in person at the Federation's office (Ref C). In late December, the Regional Director for the International Labor Organization told local news agencies "We are no longer worried about (the camel jockey) issue in Oman." In July, Oman ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

SECTION 6: Worker Rights: In December, a strike apparently spurred by management's decision to fire the head of the workers' committee (Ref D) closed Salalah Port, Oman's largest seaport, for two days. Both the Ministry of Manpower and members of the National Committee mediated the dispute in Oman's southern city of Salalah, ultimately saving the job of a union representative. Also in December, Oman co-hosted a Regional Labor Dialogue bringing together union members, company representatives and government officials from nine Arab states, plus the U.S. and the International Labor Organization. The Dialogue focused on implementing ILO core conventions on workers rights. Oman has now ratified four of the ILO's core labor standards: Convention 29 on Forced Labor, Convention 105 on the Abolition of Forced Labor, Convention 138 on Minimum Age, and Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

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